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INJURED WORKERS IN MA REPORT HIGH SATISFACTION WITH MEDICAL CARE

Good access to medical care and quicker return to work also noted.

A recent national study released by the Workers' Compensation Research Institute (WCRI) found that injured workers in Massachusetts report better outcomes to their work related injuries. Overall, they recover faster from the injury, have greater satisfaction with their health care and return to work more quickly. The study, titled *Outcomes for Injured Workers in California, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Texas* compares outcomes and costs for workers' compensation claims in these four states.

Injured workers in Massachusetts (and Pennsylvania) fared better than those in California or Texas when it came to "perceived recovery of physical health and functioning; more frequent, faster, and more sustainable returns to work; greater access to desired providers and services; and higher levels of satisfaction with their health care."¹

Among the findings, 84% of injured workers in Massachusetts were somewhat or very satisfied with their initial providers and only 11% of those workers surveyed said they wished to change their primary medical provider. Also, the "overwhelming majority" of those surveyed said they were able to get appointments with their initial and primary medical providers in a timely manner.

"These results show that key elements of the Massachusetts system, such as employees choosing their treating physician, medical utilization review and treatment guidelines are highly effective," said Catherine Farnam, Director of the Office of Health Policy for the Department of Industrial Accidents. Farnam added, "Medical utilization review and the treatment guidelines are the work of health care professionals who have the knowledge and expertise to determine quality care for injured workers. The WCRI data shows that these systems work to ensure the injured worker receives the care they need in a timely manner. The results are a quicker recovery and a quicker return to the workforce."

"While these results are heartening, we must continue to find ways to help the state's workers' compensation system work even better," said Jane C. Edmonds, Director of Workforce Development.

¹ Source: *Outcomes for Injured Workers in California, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Texas*, Workers' Compensation Research Institute, Richard A. Victor, Peter S. Barth, and Te-Chun Liu, December 2003.

Edmonds added that the DIA has been beefing up enforcement efforts to identify those employers who do not, but must under state law, carry workers' compensation insurance. "Doing so, Edmonds said, will protect more of our workers on the job who need it."

While the state to state comparisons between California, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Texas reflect differing programs and methodologies, Massachusetts officials are pleased that the data shows the strengths of the Commonwealth's Workers' Compensation system. The WCRI report said that costs related to medical care for injured workers in Massachusetts were lower than the other three states in the study.

For more information please contact Bill Taupier at 617-727-4900 ext. 560.

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